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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2007

In Today's Papers

Turkish Military Launches First Cross Border Operation into northern Iraq

All papers report Sunday and today that, according to the Turkish General Staff's (TGS) statement on its webpage, Turkish forces inflicted heavy casualties on PKK militants in northern Iraq on Saturday. This development came one day after Prime Minister Erdogan announced the cabinet gave the military authorization for such operations on November 28th. "The first operation was carried out on December 1, and operations will continue according to the intelligence provided," TGS said, adding "the operations that will be carried out only target the PKK and not the people living in northern Iraq, as long as they are not hostile to Turkish forces."

On Sunday, Government Spokesman Cemil Cicek said, "the terrorist organization is our target; we have no intentions for Iraq's riches.

TGS will decide the time of the operations and is in constant cooperation with the government." Mainstream Sabah reports today that on Sunday, Turkish F-16s taking off from Diyarbakir attacked a PKK camp in Hakurk in northern Iraq, and adds that Turkish forces based in the border province of Hakkari were shelling the PKK positions in Dola Mir and Dola Merge in the region. Sunday's Hurriyet and Vatan report the Turkish military dealt a heavy blow to the PKK, thanks to the "hot intelligence supplied by the US." Several papers say the US extended support to the Turkish operations, quoting Pentagon Spokesman Almarah Belk as saying, "Turkey has the right to defend itself." White House National Security Spokesman Gordon Johndroe linked the Turkish cross-border operations against the PKK to efforts to boost the cooperation established by President Bush and Prime Minister Erdogan in their November 5th meeting. Monday, papers also report Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte told a news conference that the PKK should not be allowed to stage attacks against Turkey from Iraqi territory.

Abducted Syriac Priest Released Unharmmed

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report over the weekend and today that Daniel Savci, a Syriac Christian priest kidnapped last week in Mardin, was released unharmed on Friday. Police captured five suspects in connection with the kidnapping. Savci's car was ambushed on Wednesday as he was traveling to the Mor Yakup Monastery near the town of Midyat. The kidnappers were reported to have demanded a ransom of 300,000 Euro. Papers report an official said the kidnapping was not religiously motivated.

Turkey-Greece to Exchange Goodwill Measures during Babacan's Visit
Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report over the weekend that Foreign Minister Ali Babacan will pay an official visit to Greece on December 4-5 in order to discuss security in the Aegean. Cyprus will also be discussed, but no one expects a breakthrough before the February 17th Greek Cypriot elections. Turkey and Greece are expected to make mutual good-will gestures over minority foundations. Mainstream Sabah says the Greek government submitted draft legislation seeking the return of assets to the Muslim Turkish minority foundation in Western Thrace. In addition, the Greek Parliament is expected to approve a bill for the establishment of a Turkish university in Western Thrace. The Greek media reports Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis will visit Turkey on January 18-19. Sabah says that before the Karamanlis visit, the Turkish government is expected to reopen Halki Seminary in Istanbul, as well as approve a critical bill about non-Muslim foundations.

Investigation of Plane Crash in Isparta Continues

All papers continue the coverage of the crash of an MD-83 civilian plane carrying 50 passengers and seven crew members. The flight was in the process of landing at the Isparta airport when it crashed into a mountain reaching 1830 meters high. Sunday papers say the

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plane crashed because the pilot tried to compensate for a delay and shifted its route to make a shortcut landing. Papers say that the airport in Isparta, like Van and Diyarbakir airports in Turkey, was not equipped with ILS automatic landing system. According to papers, the airport also lacks a radar system, so the control tower in Isparta did not notice that the plane deviated from the landing route.

Poll on Headwear Usage in Turkey

Mainstream Milliyet reports Turkey's prestigious survey company "Konda" held a public opinion poll on "Religion, secularism and turban in Turkey." The survey shows that over the last four years, the period after the AKP swept to power in 2002, the number of women covering their heads increased from 64.2 percent to 69.4 percent; in 2003 the number of women covering their heads was 13 million, while today the number reaches 14 million. The survey shows that there is a significant rise in the rate of women wearing "turban" as a "political symbol": Four years ago, 3.5 percent of Turkish women were wearing the turban. Today, that figure reaches 16.3 percent. The percentage of Turkish women wearing the folk-style headgear has dropped to 51.9 from 59.5 in 2003. In 2003, 56.3 percent of the women living in urban areas covered their heads; the same figure stands at 64.9 percent in 2007. The survey has canvassed the views of 5,289 people in 41 provinces from September 8-9.

Editorial Commentary on Kosovo

Ferai Tinc commented in the mainstream Hurriyet (12/3): "During his visit to Turkey, Serbian President Tadic said that an independent Kosovo will create chaos. While Kosovo is not discussed much lately, the crisis is right around the corner. Kosovo's separation from Serbia carries more risks than Slovenia's separation from Croatia. Moreover, the risk is not limited only to Serbia and Kosovo. From Turkey's perspective, the first risk is extreme nationalism, which could create problems between Turks and Albanians in the sensitive geographical region of Kosovo. There are many Turks from Kosovo residing in Turkey, with some of these Turks being of Albanian origin and others of Turkish origin. Therefore any problems between these two parties will reflect on Turkey as well. Of course, from a wider perspective, there are more serious risks which threaten the region. The peace in the former Yugoslavia was established with the cooperation of the US and Russia. But now, there is not such an environment of cooperation. On the contrary,

Kosovo is where the US and Russia clash openly and clearly - the Bush Administration supports Kosovo's independence, while the Russian leader Putin stands against it. Another risk is Bosnia. The politicians in Serbia stated that, if Kosovo's independence is recognized, they will have the right to separate from the Republic of Bosnia. All these developments are being followed closely by one hundred fifty thousand Muslims, who returned to their villages only after the Dayton agreement. Turkey's stance is not very clear, but it is widely believed that Turkey is supporting independence. As it was in the past, in the future also, Turkey will always be interested in Kosovo."

TV News:

NTV

Domestic News

- Two PKK terrorists were killed in clashes during security operations in Sirnak province on the border with Iraq.
- Swedish Ambassador Christer Asp criticized the pro-Kurdish DTP for their reluctance to call the PKK a terror organization. He also noted that Europe is now better able to understand Turkey's challenges in the fight against the PKK terror.
- The EU Parliament will hold a conference on "EU, Turkey and the Kurds." Former Kurdish MP Leyla Zana, the pro-Kurdish DTP leader Nurettin Demirtas, DTP deputy Ahmet Turk, journalist Ali Bayramoglu,

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Nobel Peace Prize-winning Iranian lawyer Shirin Ebadi, South African cleric Desmond Tutu, Professor Noam Chomsky, Turkish novelist Yasar Kemal, and MEP Joost Lagendijk are to join the conference.

- Opposition party CHP will set up a special committee to monitor progress in the Southeastern Anatolia (GAP) project.

International News

- President Vladimir Putin's United Russia Party wins a landslide victory in the Russian elections.
 - Gordon Johndroe, a spokesman for the National Security Council, said Saturday the Americans were "working hard" to boost cooperation with Turkey in the fight against the PKK.
 - Khalid Al Batsh, a senior leader of the Islamic Jihad movement, said all Palestinian factions, including Hamas and al-Fatah, would come together soon to meet in Egypt.
 - An earthquake measuring 6.0 on the Richter scale shook Indonesia's Java Island on Sunday. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties.
- WILSON